

ILS enters new market segments

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Flow cytometry, invivo imaging, diagnostics

It has been a long journey for Imperial Life Sciences (ILS) since its inception in 1992 as a distribution house specializing in life sciences research products. Since then, it has come a long way to be among the elite class of Top 10 biodistribution companies in India. Currently, ILS is headquartered at Pace City, Gurgaon, Haryana. In an interview with BioSpectrum, Suresh K Gupta, MD and Neeraj Gupta, director, sales and marketing, Imperial Life Sciences (ILS) share their thoughts on the road ahead for ILS. Excerpts from the interview:

Since its inception, how has ILS addressed the needs of the life sciences industry?

SK Gupta: ILS provides the Indian researcher with a range of state-of-the-art instrumentation, reagents, softwares and other consumables, providing complete solutions for laboratories working in genomics, proteomics, cell culture, drug discovery and bioproduction.

Neeraj Gupta: The objective of ILS has been always to simplify the research process by providing quality products at cost-effective pricing, including, best service with the help of ILS representatives in all the major cities and prompt technical

support by field application. Scientists at major locations get quick deliveries by an all India distributor network. ILS has been a major player in every aspect of science to the Indian researcher for the past 18 years.

What are the different segments that the company caters to and who are the major clients?

Neeraj Gupta: ILS has a multi-pronged approach for life sciences with a focused strategy for the Indian life sciences industry with major divisions like genomics, proteomics, cell biology, molecular and cell imaging, analytical and lifeline divisions. Our major clients include government and autonomous institutes. We also serve major pharma and CRO clients.

What was the company's revenue for the FY 2008-09? What is the expected revenue from the current fiscal?

SK Gupta: ILS registered revenue of Rs 102.90 crore in FY 2008-09 as against Rs 88.73 crore in FY 2007-08 making it to the eighth position among the top 20 biosuppliers in India. Instrumentation has been the major growth driver for the company with 60-70 percent of the revenue derived from it. ILS is expecting a growth in the overall portfolio based on the new associations with leading technology providers in India and, is expecting a revenue growth of 30-35 percent in FY 2009-10.

What are the major collaborations of ILS? Are there any new collaborations in the pipeline?

SK Gupta: ILS with a partnering approach created a niche in the genomics segment with key associations with Agilent Technologies, Stratagene, Caliper Life Sciences, Lonza, IDT, Amresco, GenVault, DiscoverX, and LabWare among others. Simultaneously, based on the needs of the scientific community, ILS has broadened its horizons into proteomics with innovative technologies like the label-free protein-protein interaction platform from ForteBio or OFFGEL Fractionator, which significantly helps the researcher in their work flows. With significant associations ILS has been a major player in the cell biology field, consumables like medias, serum, primary cells and cell culture reagents, which are necessary in every cell culture facility for further expansion into innovation.

Neeraj Gupta: We have collaborated with VisualSonics, Bioscan and Faxitron to provide the Indian researcher a complete range of products for in-vivo imaging. In association with Caliper-Xenogen, we provide customers with an optical-based in-vivo imaging. Now with VisualSonics, we provide researchers with an ultrasound-based modalities. Bioscan is a known name in the preclinical market with its range of product for in-vivo imaging like the NanoPET, NanoSPECT and NanoScan, to provide researchers with the world's leading technology in PET, SPECT and CT.

What are the challenges faced by biosuppliers as far as the product supply in India is concerned?

SK Gupta: One of the major challenges before biosuppliers in India is that the purchase process in India takes a fair amount of time sometime ranging from six months to one year for major instrumentation business, which overall affects the product supply. Preference of price over technology is also a hindrance to the overall purchase process in India.

What are the new segments ILS is taking up? What will be your future strategy for those markets?

Neeraj Gupta: ILS is venturing into two major business segments in the life sciences industry, the flow cytometry market and the in-vivo imaging market with a complete plethora of modalities for the needs of the scientists.

Our recent collaboration with Amnis Corporation has given us an edge in the flow cytometry market. Soon, ILS will introduce revolutionary and highly cost-effective—maintenance-free and easy-to-use flow cytometer system which can make flow cytometry personal to each cell user. Animal research is a common area for majority of researchers in India and, ILS will be the first company to offer imaging modalities for the same in all respects.

Venturing into diagnostics

Recently, ILS, which specializes in life sciences business, ventured into the diagnostic industry with its cost effective and sensitive Real Time PCR-based swine flu H1N1 detection kit. Validation of the kit has been done at the National Institute of Virology, Pune, as per the recommendation of the Indian Council of Medical Research, New Delhi, and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The kit has got 99 percent concordance with the results as per the WHO/CDC protocol. "We are planning for the production of these kits to cater to the needs of the swine flu detection centers throughout India. ILS further plans to extend the development of these real time PCR-based kits for the detection of diseases like dengue and hepatitis," says Neeraj Gupta, director sales and marketing, ILS.

Rahul Koul in Gurgaon